

### 3. WHITE DOTS ON THE LEGS OF BARKING DEER

I had kept an orphaned muntjac for over one year in my house (Wildlife Warden's Bungalow) at Shencottah, before the animal was taken to the Wildlife orphanage at Mundanthurai. The animal was brought to me when it was about 15-25 days old.

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It had conspicuous white dots on its legs just above the hoofs. This aspect of coloration has not been mentioned in Prater's BOOK OF INDIAN ANIMALS and on the animal in the colour plate (Plate 68).

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### 4. A NOTE ON CANNIBALISM IN DESERT RODENTS

Cannibalistic propensities have been noted in various small mammals by several workers (Prakash 1964, Gupta and Agarwal 1968, Ghosh 1970, Purohit and Bohra 1973). Most of the instances reported on cannibalism, however, pertain to laboratory maintained rodents. The shortage of food has been regarded to be the main cannibalism inducing factor in rodents. I have handled breeding and rearing of *Tatera indica*, *Meriones hurrianae*, *Rattus meltada*, *Rattus cutchicus*, *Rattus rattus*, *Golunda ellioti* in laboratory. Irrespective of any shortage of food and water (provided *ad libitum*) these rodent species exhibited partial to full cannibalistic activity on new born young. Some times only mother and just born litters were left undisturbed in large breeding cages with ample greens as well as dry food and

water, even then, complete devouring of litters occurred. These observations probably rule-out the possibility that only the paucity of food induces cannibalism. Further, cannibalism may not be regarded as an inborn habit because in several instances, more than one rodent caught in the same live trap, have not revealed this phenomenon. Therefore, devouring of litters by the mother under optimum living conditions can be explained in the man-made and artificial environment of the laboratory is considered a stress reaction — the stress of captivity. In the natural habitat of rodents such stressful conditions probably do not occur and hence such devouring of litters may not happen. This fact is confirmed by observations made on the burrowing patterns of field rodents where no such damaged young are encountered.

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## MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

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of the Indian desert gerbil, *Meriones hurrianae* Jerdon. II. Breeding season, Litter-size and Post-natal development. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 61: 142-149.

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### 5. BANDICOOT RAT SEIZING A SNAKE

At dusk on March 15, 1982 when a fresh-water snake, *Enhydris enhydris* Schneider, was moving at the water's edge of a roadside ditch at Kakdwip, 24-Parganas, West Bengal, a large Bandicoot rat, *Bandicota indica* (Bechstein) suddenly came out of a nearby bush and caught the snake. I focussed a 3-celled torch on the spot and saw that the Bandicoot was moving in to the bush holding the snake at about its anterior quarter of the body. I went close to the site but could neither locate the rat nor the snake.

It is believed that the rat might have seized the snake as food. Like all other rats the

Bandicoot rats are omnivorous and feed on household refuse, on grain and vegetables, and occasionally attack poultry (Prater 1965). Chakraborty and Chakraborty (1982) reported from the analysis of the gut contents that *B. indica* accepts a wide spectrum of animals, right from insects to amphibians. Behura (1958), however, reported a musk shrew attacking a snake.

Rats are, as a rule, known to be seized and swallowed by snakes. Perhaps this is the first occasion I have known of a Bandicoot rat seizing a snake.

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(Bechstein) in the fields of West Bengal during rainy season. *Rodent Newl.* 6(4): 27.

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### 6. RECORD OF A FOETUS OF THE FINLESS BLACK PORPOISE FROM GOA COAST

(With six text-figures)

On the morning of February 20, 1980, when collecting samples of fish on the beach of

Vasco-da-Gama (Goa), I saw some fishermen butchering a shark-like, smooth-bodied, black